



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Reminder to All Gulf of Mexico Pelagic Longline Fishermen Participating in Fisheries for Highly Migratory Species

The National Marine Fisheries Service reminds all pelagic longline (PLL) fishermen participating in fisheries for Atlantic highly migratory species (HMS) that possession and use of live bait in conjunction with PLL fishing is prohibited in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). To reduce bycatch and bycatch mortality of overfished billfish species, the possession and use of live bait by PLL vessels participating in fisheries for HMS was prohibited effective September 1, 2000 (65 FR 47213).

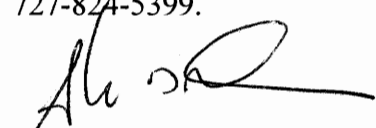
Current regulations at 50 CFR 635.21(c)(4) stipulate that PLL vessels participating in fisheries for Atlantic HMS in the GOM, may **NOT**:

- fish or deploy PLL gear with live bait affixed to the hooks;
- possess live bait on board;
- maintain live baitfish in any tank or well on board; and/or
- set up or attach an aeration or water circulation device to any tank or well.

Minimizing bycatch and bycatch mortality of overfished Atlantic billfish species is an important component of efforts to rebuild their populations to healthy levels.

NMFS reminds owners and operators of HMS-permitted vessels using pelagic longline gear of requirements to possess and use only large circle hooks, as required under the Federal regulations at 50 CFR 635.21 to reduce interactions with, and injury to, Atlantic sea turtles and other non-target species. Additionally, NMFS reminds owners and operators of HMS-permitted vessels using pelagic longline, bottom longline, or gillnet gear of the requirement to attend, and become certified at a Protected Species Safe Handling, Release and Identification Workshop, as specified at 50 CFR 635.8. These free workshops are intended to ensure that fishermen possess the skills and knowledge necessary to correctly identify and handle protected species, including sea turtles, and to maximize the safe removal of fishing gear from incidentally captured sea turtles. These workshops are further described at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/workshops/index.htm>.

For additional information, please contact the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 727-824-5399.


Alan D. Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

JAN - 4 2008

Date



Printed on Recycled Paper

